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REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS OF LITERATURE

On the Cosmic Relations. HENRY HOLT. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1914. 2 vols. Pp. 989.

Mr. Holt's book is interesting in a variety of ways. It is a personal document from a candid, generous, and very human individual; it contains a voluminous review of phenomena studied by the Society for Psychological Research and some other similar material, and it proposes a theory of "reality" for which Herbert Spencer and Henri Bergson are the most notable authorities.

From Spencer and from Mr. Holt's own buoyant temperament comes the author's confidence in the evolutionary progress of the race; from sources less easy to enumerate, but which have found in M. Bergson their most gifted modern spokesman, and from Mr. Holt's rare sense of kinship with nature and from a spontaneous delight in her varied beauty, comes his conviction that the world is a place in which a man is normally at home. "I have no time or space or inclination to argue with those who deny a plan in Nature. He who does, probably lives away from Nature" (p. 931).

"Our 'Cosmic Relations' is a brief term for the interactions between Soul and Universe." "With some of the reactions we are very familiar, some we know vaguely, there may be others at which we merely guess, and probably the vast majority we do not even guess about" (p. 6). But evolution is helping us to penetrate into the little known, for "it is plain corollary of evolution that there should at times appear germs of faculty but faintly and rarely apprehended, giving rise to phenomena new, strange, doubtful. In this vague field lie many, perhaps most, of our future possibilities, and it would be a very chary review of our cosmic relations that should leave it out, or that even should refrain from any inferences regarding the unknown that our faint glimpses of it may legitimately suggest" (p. 71). Somehow life has advanced from the darkness and monotony of the protozoön's life in a puddle to the exaltation in the presence of what is most beautiful and inspiring in the world. Part of Mr. Holt's purpose is "to impress that, as our universe has been a gradual revelation, up step by step from the protozoön's, ours is presumably only a part of one as much beyond ours, as ours is beyond the protozoön's. The amphioxus must have vague feelings of something beyond what it can sense; and far more certainly do we" (p. 58).

Mr. Holt's chief concern is with the chances of immortality, an idea very properly discredited when it was found that authority was not evidence, but for which real evidence must now be admitted to exist, Mr. Holt believes, if the results of "psychical research" are studied with an open mind. Any discussion of the value of that evidence or any review of the portions of it brought together would far exceed the space available. There is no doubt that it contains much extraordinary material, fragmentary, difficult to estimate, but undeniably impressive, and that it has been treated by the scientific skeptics with a rather supercilious

indifference. It is certain, too, that some of those who have found this evidence convincing have been men of undoubted scientific capacity and intellectual honesty. Mr. Holt shows no impatience with the skeptics; he rather invites his readers to share with him an imaginative vision not unjustified, he believes, by the evidence at hand, and which should, in his opinion, contribute to the richness, freedom, and spontaneity of life on its higher levels. The following passage by William James,¹ quoted on page 933 of Mr. Holt's work, is worth repeating for its quality and for its opinion.

"When I hear good people say (as they often say, not without show of reason), that dabbling in such phenomena reduces us to a sort of jelly, disintegrates the critical faculties, liquefies the character, and makes of one a *gobe mouche* generally, I console myself by thinking of my friends Frederic Myers and Richard Hodgson. These men lived exclusively for psychical research, and it converted both to spiritism. Hodgson would have been a man among men anywhere; but I doubt whether under any other baptism he would have been that happy, sober, and righteous form of energy which his face proclaimed him in his later years, when heart and head alike were wholly satisfied by his occupation. Myers's character also grew stronger in every particular for his devotion to the same inquiries. Brought up on literature and sentiment, something of a courtier, passionate and disdainful, and impatient naturally, he was made over again from the day he took up psychical research seriously. He became learned in science, circumspect, democratic in sympathy, endlessly patient, and above all, happy. The fortitude of his last hours touched the heroic, so completely were the atrocious sufferings of his body cast into insignificance by his interest in the cause he lived for. When a man's pursuit gradually makes his face shine and grow handsome, you may be sure it is a worthy one. Both Hodgson and Myers kept growing ever handsomer and stronger-looking."

The central feature of Mr. Holt's imaginative vision is the idea of a world soul or cosmic consciousness from which we derive our fragmentary lives, and from which we are cut off during our waking hours by the machinery of physical existence, but of which we may (Mr. Holt is sure we do) gain glimpses in dreams.

Mr. Holt's dream experience is one that he may well be envied, and must strike most of his readers as evidence of an exceptionally gifted temperament. Never, he tells us (p. 892) "in my dreams have I seen or heard anything extraordinary in the arts where I have some trifling capacity; while in some arts where I have no capacity at all, I have from childhood seen things more beautiful than any human being has ever made." For these splendid visions Mr. Holt can not believe himself responsible.

Mr. Holt does not preach or instruct. He offers not discoveries, but suggestions. What psychical research may find out can not be decided to-day. To unlimber the guns of scientific method against so human a

¹ "Memories and Studies," page 194.

book would not be profitable. If, however, a philosophical examination were attempted, the first task in hand would be a study of the idea of evolution. In the form of it advocated by Mr. Holt many students of the subject may detect the old notion of a divine providence. Mr. Holt states his faith in teleology with explicit frankness, but teleological metaphysics is just what the idea of evolution is being purged of. This will mean to many the vanishing of evolution, and that will be in some quarters a doctrine of despair. That, however, will be because of another conviction of Mr. Holt's that is certainly an error, expressed in the very first paragraph of his book. This is that the modern mechanistic theories, which are simply the result of successful technique and which have replaced the supernaturalism of preceding generations leave the world vacant and uninspiring. "With such a god, goes most that such a god implies; and until we assimilate new conceptions of the power behind the universe, we are getting along with a short supply of faith, and in some respects not getting along at all well" (p. 1). No doubt the significance of the world must be gotten back in terms very different from the old terms. This is, however, being done, and with the great difference that the significant character of the world is sought not behind the world, but within it. The philosophy that supports human achievements, actual realization by man of his opportunities, can not be any type of supernaturalism whether it tells us of providence or of evolution, or of God, the absolute or the cosmic consciousness. This is not to be blind to the likelihood of revolutionary discoveries in the future. It is simply to be on one's guard against interpreting really new data in the light of traditional apperceptions, in terms of precisely that tradition from which one imagines oneself intellectually emancipated.

Another question of great philosophical interest is this: Where shall an emancipated mind look for the material of its imaginative vision? And by emancipation of the mind is meant the power to take our conception of the world from the world itself, as our own age with its technique of observation is able to know it. The word "reality" seems still to deter many from going to the world in order to know about the world. Few mortals dwelling in cities, and, one may suspect, still fewer living out of them, have Mr. Holt's sensitiveness to the splendor of mountains, lakes, and light. Take this, for instance (p. 57): "Where I turn South, there rise from the plain two of those picturesque mountains of tilted strata that slope on one side and are precipitous on the other; and as I turn farther to the East I come to the Green Mountains—first, the beautiful reposeful gently-three-peaked Lincoln; next, the unsurpassed gracefulness of the Crouching Lion, not the biggest mountain I know, but the one with the most uplift; then after a few lower summits to (though fast becoming shut-out by growing trees) Mansfield, with an outline that seems really ingeniously bulky, sometimes looks bigger than the Jungfrau, and yet in winter, in that strange green twilight that now and then comes over the snow makes one think of fairies.

"Now contrast these lovely things open to my eyes and ears, with our

ancestor's universe of darkness and silence. Then suppose that he had varied the monotony of his existence by splitting himself into a family, and contrast his experience of it with mine if my little daughter should happen to get off her pony and be chased down here by my six-foot boys.

"To emphasize once more the emotional contrast (for all of the contrasts, a reason will appear presently): this beautiful universe, of which I have tried to give you some faint notion, is mine—mine—mine, even the miles and miles of mountains are as much mine to all significant intents, as if I owned them in fee simple. Compare this joy with the protozoön's right, title, and interest in his puddle. And then with all he can do, compare my privilege of making roads to all this loveliness, which was not accessible before, and leaving my gate open to all who care to come.

"Then think of the joy of doing, however badly, what amid all this, I am trying to do with my pencil (among my joys I prize that of not writing with a pen), which has nothing in the primitive verse even to contrast with it.

"Then reflect that the scene before me is but a small part of the universe open to-day—Niagara and the Grand Canyon and the Yosemite and the wonderful Pacific coast, and the Canadian Rockies, and the Alps, the Mediterranean, the Himalayas—the whole wonderful world, and the ocean and the night. Then the great architecture and sculpture and pictures; beautiful men and women; the drama—spoken and danced and sung; and Liszt's Preludes and the Pilgerchor and Beethoven's last quartets. Then, on the more intellectual side, the great books, long talks with great people, and with others who, like not a few of the great ones, are better than great.

"Reflect that beyond the joy of contemplating our universe, men have had the higher joy of creating no little of it—all the art and thought and love. Nature supplied the material and gave the hints, but the production was our own."

One may ask quite candidly, since it is a question here not of science, but of imagination, whether the Adirondacks, Shakespeare, and Beethoven need look for anything whatever to Mrs. Piper. And why should not that ideal of human progress that Mr. Holt so ardently believes in be conceived in terms of actual instrumentalities and of human results and values? Why, in a word, does not such a figure as Pasteur tell us what underlies progress? The mechanistic conception of nature is no longer the idea of a single machine; it is the conception that has arisen out of an advancing human efficiency. It is by virtue of the characteristic causalities which natural things manifest that intelligence finds any scope in this world, the world that Mr. Holt commends so eloquently to our approval. Matter misunderstood seems often enough man's enemy, but matter understood, its habits and docility noted and remembered, is man's staunchest friend. We invite Mr. Holt to share another imaginative vision of human progress where he can join hands with the physician, the engineer, and the statesman, and which will have as its central

feature nature's manifold and beneficent mechanism. This is not the mechanism of the old-fashioned world formula controlling all natural events and all human behavior so that they illustrate one and the same mathematical expression. It is simply the fact of causality in all of its empirical diversity, the type of fact upon which the farmer, the surgeon, and the teacher depend in proportion as they apply a technique or a method. It simply means that this is a world where there are right and wrong ways of procedure, and that these can be discovered by attentive observation. Bergson has called man a tool-using animal. Only in a world like ours where water will turn a wheel and a hammer drive a nail is progressive human power conceivable. Progress provides no less of a vision because man achieves it for himself.

But negative dogmatism is no more worthy here than in other fields, and Mr. Holt has given an example of freedom from it. However we may value his evidence and dialectic, Mr. Holt's book testifies to the delight of using a free imagination.

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Outline of a Study of the Self. ROBERT M. YERKES AND DANIEL W. LARUE. Revised Edition. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1914.

This outline in its first edition, has already been reviewed in this JOURNAL.¹ The new edition is prepared in the same form as the earlier one and the content, in its fundamental aspects, is the same. Various minor changes have been made, of which the following are the most conspicuous: the section of questions bearing on marital and prenatal tendencies has been omitted in favor of a general question concerning the proper qualifications of one's mate; the "Index to the Germ Plasm" is not included in the "Outline," but in a foot-note it is referred to as available to those interested; references on individual psychology are added to by the inclusion of Stern, and useful references on sex education and hygiene are included; some of the terms, such as "character" and "temperament" are more precisely defined; various questions are changed in form, transferred to other sections of the "Outline," and a few, of uncertain value originally, have been left out entirely.

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JOURNALS AND NEW BOOKS

THE JOURNAL OF ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY. December, 1914-January, 1915. *A Psychological Feature of the Precipitating Causes in the Psychoses and Its Relation to Art* (297-320): JOHN T. MACCURDY. - Art makes two appeals: on the surface is that which we can grasp con-

¹ Vol. XI., page 361.